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the WCT COMMENTATOR

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Cluster Kickoff!

By: Katie Watson and Greg Renino

Thursday, February 5th marked Cluster Kickoff Day at Brinckerhoff Elementary School. Under the facilitation of the Cluster Team, teachers are working with students in various areas of interest. Students took part in a process in which they identified topics of interest. Teachers developed themes and topics that matched their interests with the students. Then, students selected three potential clusters and were assigned to one of their three choices.

What makes this unique? First, this is heavily student-driven with support from the teacher. Students take on real world learning experiences in which they apply content and methods to develop products and services for audiences ... like practicing professionals. Traditional lesson plans are a “no-no” and students are grouped based on interest, not age. Clusters span grade levels 1-5.

This is a pilot year for Brinckerhoff as this is the first time that all students (grades 1-5) and teachers have been involved in clusters. While teachers learn to “embrace their inner cluster,” students are loving it! Clusters range from dance and photography to winter sports, scrapbooking, baking, poetry, and even pasta. It is an exciting opportunity for teachers and students alike, to explore topics that are generally not a part of the everyday academia while applying New York State Learning Standards to real life situations.



(One of the Brinckerhoff Clusters working on a dance routine.)



Acts of Kindness at Fishkill Plains: *Children Helping Children*

By Steve Schwartz

In February, 2009, the third, fourth and fifth grade students at Fishkill Plains Elementary School were invited to participate in a fundraiser for St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital. 126 children participated in the Math-A-Thon program to raise money. Our school raised a grand total of \$8,169. Mrs. Dean’s fourth grade class raised the highest amount of \$889. Elizabeth Kip in Mrs. Bruno’s fifth grade class raised the highest individual amount of \$400.

This was indeed another shining example of how the students at Fishkill Plains dedicate themselves to showing “acts of kindness,” specifically for the benefit of other children. The project proved to be an achievement that students, teachers, and administration is proud to announce. Character Education lessons teach us to seize every opportunity to perform gracious “acts of kindness” towards others! Congratulations to all!

Be a ‘Turnoff’ on March 28 During Earth Hour



Turning off the lights, the vacuums, the toasters and the coffee makers; that’s what people around the world will be doing for one hour on March 28 starting at 8:30 p.m. local time, when Earth Hour participants will vote with their light switches to take a stand against climate change.

Sponsored by the World Wildlife Fund and joined by the AFT, Earth Hour will douse the lights in more than 400 cities, from the Eiffel Tower in Paris (the City of Lights) to the Las Vegas Strip. (For more information, go to www.EarthHourUS.org.)

Tier III & IV Workshop

Sheila J. Salenger, teacher Board Member of the New York State Teachers’ Retirement System(NYSTRS), will be conducting a workshop for members of the WCT in Tiers III & IV on Thursday, April 16th at 4 p.m. in the library at Roy C. Ketcham HS. The maximum number of participants for this workshop is 50. The workshop is NOT in lecture format. Your questions will set the discussion, in tandem with materials you will receive. Everything about tier III/IV, the retirement system, current benefits available to you, your future benefits, as well as any concerns or understandings you have about the TRS are great topics to bring up. Light refreshments will be served at the workshop. We hope to see you there.

TIER III/IV WORKSHOP – April 16, 2009

NAME _____

SCHOOL _____

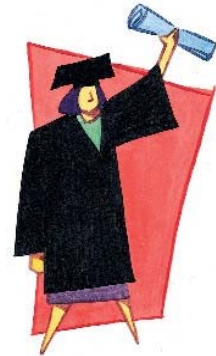
Return to the WCT office via interschool mail by April 13th Affiliated with New York State United Teachers, American Federation of Teachers, NEA & AFL-CIO

Ralph & Janet Capasso Scholarship

The WCT, in conjunction with the Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers, is offering three (3) \$1500 scholarships to seniors presently enrolled in any public or private high school planning to attend college in the fall of 2009. To be eligible, candidates must have a parent or legal guardian who is a member in good standing of the WCT.

The selection process for these awards will require the following:

- an application
- an essay
- a high school transcript
- one letter of recommendation
- a personal interview for the finalists.



Applications are available in the WCT office. Please call 227-5065 to request an application or pick it up directly. To be considered, applications must reach the WCT office no later than 5 p.m. on **Tuesday, March 31, 2009.**

Committee members are: James DeNitto, June May and Norma Najjar

WCT Earns Three Awards in Journalism Competition

The WCT Commentator and the WCT web site will be recognized at the 2009 NYSUT Journalism Luncheon during the Representative Assembly in Buffalo, NY. The WCT submits entries in the category of Class IV, meaning that we have a local membership between 651 - 1,000 members.

- The article "Love the Skin You're In" by Jane Stockslager (<http://wcteachers.org/comm0708/feb01.pdf>) has received an Award of Merit in the category of Class IV Best Article on Health Issues.
- The September 7, 2007 New Members' Issue (<http://wcteachers.org/comm0708/sept7.pdf>) has received an Honorable Mention in the category of Class IV New Member's Issues.
- The WCT Web Site (<http://wcteachers.org>) has received an Honorable Mention in the category of Class IV Best Web Site.

WCT shirts and lanyards will soon be available for purchase at the WCT Office. More information is on the way.





Corner

Trustees:

Christine Romano, Chairperson
Betty Seifert, Treasurer
Erin Mulligan, Secretary
Philip Gertler, Trustee
Pasquale Delli Carpini, Trustee
Linda Leito, Administrator

WCT telephone number: 845-227-5065

Daniel H. Cook telephone number: 1-800-342-6651

Important information for all members:

- √ You must let the WTF know of any change in your personal information as soon as possible
- √ Student verification forms must be sent to Daniel H. Cook every semester
- √ Dental and prescription reimbursement forms are on line at the WTF website
- √ Please direct all concerns or questions to Linda at the WCT office or directly to Daniel H. Cook

**PRESCRIPTION
REIMBURSEMENT
FORMS ARE DUE
BY MARCH 31ST!**

Board of Education Meetings Schedule

- March 23, 2009 - Ketcham, Kinry, Oak Grove (held at WJH)
- March 30, 2009 (held at WJH)
- April 6, 2009 - Evans, Fishkill, Wappingers
- April 26, 2009 (TUESDAY) - Fishkill Plains, Myers, Van Wyck
- May 4, 2009 - Brinckerhoff, John Jay, Vassar
- May 18, 2009 - Gayhead, Orchard View, Sheafe
- June 8, 2009 - Ketcham, Wappingers

Remember to RSVP for the WCT Dinner

Remember to download the RSVP form for the **April 24th** WCT Recognition Dinner. RSVPs must be received by **April 17th**. Go to <http://wcteachers.org/forms/invite.doc> for more information.

Stressed about work? Having financial issues and need to talk about it? Are you having a family issue and you don't know what to do? Or you just need someone to listen?

Call the Employee Assistance Program

The EAP provides free confidential assessments, information, and referral services to all WCSD employees and their immediate family members. EAP's 24-hour a day crisis line is staffed by a trained counseling professional.

Contact the 24-hour EAP Crisis Line at **1-800-724-0917** or during regular business hours, you may reach the EAP at **485-3710**.

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(continued on page 6)

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FREE CAT: Beautiful orange and white cat, friendly lap cat, playful, about 1-2 years old, neutered, all shots up to date, litter box trained, happy to be inside. He is wonderful in every way, except that since he came into our home in December, he can't get along with our current cats. Contact Tad or Sue 266-4676 or nine.8@att.net.

THINK SUMMER! FOR RENT: 4 bedroom beach house in Charlestown, RI, only 2 1/2 hrs from Dutchess Co. 1 1/2 baths, large screened-in porch, newly remodded fully equipped kitchen, large rec room in finished basement with pool table, and outdoor shower. Sleeps 8 comfortably. Just bring your bathing suit! It is less than 1 mile to lovely beach with private beachside parking. It also is within 1/2 mile of stores and casual restaurant. Newport, Mystic, Foxwoods, and Block Island ferry are a short drive away. If interested, call Roberta at 221-9872.

FOR SALE: GE Washing Machine, 3-4 years old in excellent condition, \$175 or best offer, call 845-849-2357.

FOR RENT: 1 bedroom, 1 bath apartment for rent in quiet residential neighborhood in Hopewell Junction. Minutes to Van Wyck, Gayhead, John Jay and Fishkill Plains. Large closets, beautiful back deck and great front porch. 900/month includes everything. Clean and updated. Call 505-7444.

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